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**KNOW Heartworms** aims to educate veterinarians and cat owners about the real threat of feline heartworm disease, which reveals itself as HARD, and the importance of prevention. The American Heartworm Society and the American Association of Feline Practitioners have partnered together for this campaign, which is sponsored by Pfizer Animal Health.

## And the Winners Are...

Winners of the first annual **KNOW Heartworms Veterinary Hospital Awareness Contest**:

- 1** **Wolftever Pet Hospital**  
Harrison, Tenn.
  - 2** **Cat Hospital At Towson**  
Baltimore, Md.
  - 3** **VCA Hemingway Cat Hospital**  
Saratoga, Calif.
- Eastex Veterinary Clinic**  
Kingwood, Texas

# Do We Love Our Dogs MORE THAN OUR CATS?



## Finding Creative Ways to Promote Feline Heartworm Disease Education

The American Heartworm Society (AHS), the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) and Pfizer Animal Health are proud to announce the winner of the **KNOW Heartworms Veterinary Hospital Awareness Contest**, Wolftever Pet Hospital. The entire staff in Harrison, Tenn., successfully and creatively implemented a **KNOW Heartworms** campaign that educated clients about feline heartworm disease and encouraged prevention.

Dr. Darlene White, a veterinarian at Wolftever Pet Hospital, received a **KNOW Heartworms** clinic kit in February: "It was the best education packet I've ever received. It hit all levels, not just the veterinarian or the veterinary technician. There was something in there for everyone, from the educational articles to the coloring pages for children."

The staff of Wolftever Pet Hospital used the materials in the kit to educate the community as well as their own clients.



Wolftever Pet Hospital staff dressed in costume to help educate students at Harrison Elementary School in Harrison, Tenn.

(Cont'd on page 10, Creative Ways)



**Charles Thomas (Tom) Nelson, DVM**

Past President, American Heartworm Society

Dr. Nelson is considered a pioneer for his clinical work in the study of heartworm disease in cats. In 1997-98, after doubting the validity of the incidence of heartworm in cats, he conducted his own study to determine true incidence. His work resulted in a paper presented at the 1998 Symposium, "Recent Advancements in Heartworm Disease."

**Making Sense of Feline Heartworm Disease**

The American Heartworm Society (AHS) has been a proud partner of KNOW Heartworms since its launch in January. The campaign has fostered the Society's overall goal of furthering knowledge and understanding of heartworm disease.

As a Society, we are continually trying to find new and better ways to educate about heartworms. For example, we received feedback regarding our incidence map. Veterinarians in certain areas were concerned their regions were not showing the heartworm prominence they've been experiencing. We updated the map, seen here, to include the latest data and more detail.

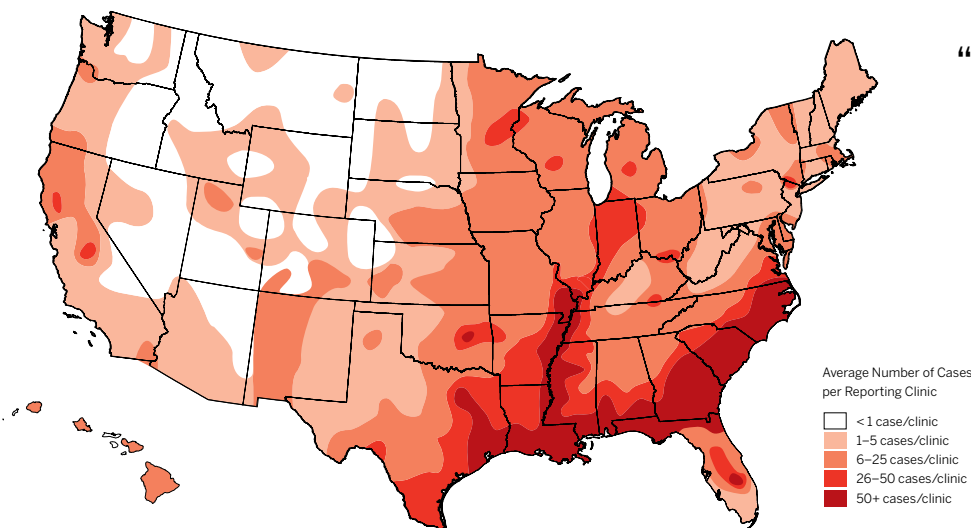
As a spokesperson for the campaign, I am seeing firsthand the impact KNOW Heartworms is having on the animal health field. Our campaign is turning heads, and many are assuming that this disease is a new occurrence in cats. In reality, heartworms were first reported in cats in 1921, but we have seen an increase in the number of cases of feline heartworms diagnosed in the last decade. This is mostly due to an increased awareness of the disease among veterinarians as well as pet owners. In 1998, over half of the programming in the American Heartworm Society's Triennial Heartworm Symposium was focused on feline heartworm disease, providing vital information on diagnostics and prevention. This year, for the 2007

Symposium, we've devoted an entire day to the subject, where detailed information on the pathogenesis of Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease will be presented along with updated information on diagnosis.

I wrote in the last *Inside & Out* article about how antigen-based tests are less effective for cats than dogs, and I've received many inquiries about this topic. First, AHS recommends using both antigen and antibody tests for screening. Since we recommend placing all cats on prevention, one might ask, "Why test?" One reason is to get data from your area if it's not available; the other is for medical/legal reasons. If you don't test, but place a cat on prevention and two years later the cat dies as a result of heartworms, was the cat previously infected or did the prevention fail? If either test yields a positive result, the cat should still be placed on prevention. All cats should be on prevention.

I've also fielded questions on false positives in antibody test results. In fact, false positives are extremely rare, only occurring less than 2 percent of the time. Because we now have a better understanding of feline heartworm disease, we now know what we are looking for. Our interpretation of a positive antibody test indicates the cat is either currently infected or was previously infected, not just that it was exposed to the infective stage of the parasite.

(Cont'd on page 8, Making Sense)



The severity of heartworm incidence as shown in this map is based on the average number of cases per reporting clinic. Some remote regions of the United States lack veterinary clinics, therefore we have no reported cases from these areas.

**HEARTWORM INCIDENCE 2005**  
© American Heartworm Society

"Practitioners are just now starting to understand that feline heartworm disease is more of a pulmonary problem than a cardiovascular one."  
—Dr. Nelson

**Widespread Endorsements Will Strengthen KNOW Heartworms' Influence**

The KNOW Heartworms campaign is off to a great start, and the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP), is proud to continue its partnership with the American Heartworm Society with the generous support of Pfizer Animal Health. The campaign has provided a channel for collecting and disseminating information to veterinarians about this significant health hazard that is impossible to cure, difficult to manage but *entirely* preventable.

Like many veterinarians, I didn't always see heartworm disease as a threat to cats. There was a time when we thought all the peribronchial disease we were seeing was "just" feline asthma. I first considered it when Dr. Ray Dillon began sharing his research, even though I'd seen my first sudden death case that had an adult worm on postmortem many years prior. Once I was aware of feline heartworm disease, I started to recognize radiographic signs of pulmonary artery enlargement, truncation or tortuosity, even without signs of pulmonary parenchymal disease, and I recognized that this was a real entity. I still believe there are diseased cats that I haven't been able to definitively diagnose, but are highly suspect.

I've received calls from colleagues in our area who thought the syndrome didn't even exist, but now we have a significant amount of scientific information that proves

otherwise. This scientific information is provided in the KNOW Heartworms materials in a way that engages the entire veterinary health care team. As we have seen since the start of the campaign, the more team members who are educated about the problem, the better they are at teaching clients, and the more cats will be protected. This is consistent with the mission of the AAFP, which "*improves the health and well-being of cats by supporting high standards of practice, continuing education, and scientific investigation.*"

In this campaign, practitioners are working with parasitologists, infectious disease specialists and pathologists, along with industry and communication resources that allow our *combined* efforts to be so much more than the sum of each individual's contributions.

The interest is growing as more people hear the message. In April, Dr. Nelson led an AAFP Rounds session on VIN. It was a great success, and since the transcripts are so easy to access after the fact, it will continue to educate veterinary practice teams. As more and more practitioners, academicians and other specialists see that the syndrome is a serious concern, they will understand that cats need prevention.

"There was a time when we thought all the peribronchial disease we were seeing was 'just' feline asthma."  
—Dr. Brunt



**Jane Brunt, DVM**

Past President, American Association of Feline Practitioners

Dr. Brunt is the founder and owner of the Cat Hospital At Towson, the first feline exclusive veterinary hospital in Maryland. She is the KNOW Heartworms spokesperson representing the American Association of Feline Practitioners, a group for which she has been a board member since 1998, and was president in 2006.

# New Study Reveals Pathology of Feline Heartworm Disease; Proves Existence of HARD

A landmark study<sup>1,2</sup> that shows conclusively that heartworms do not need to reach maturity to cause pathology in cats has answered many of the questions surrounding feline heartworm and greatly extended scientific knowledge about the long-misunderstood disease.

disease in cats. It has shifted our focus from adult worms to more immature stages, and solidly defined feline heartworm disease as a significant pulmonary syndrome, now defined as Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease.”

## Shifting Perspective

Understanding feline heartworm has always been challenging due to the difficulties in testing for it and its frequent asymptomatic presentation. As a result, the affliction—unlike its canine counterpart—for years was thought to be infrequent in occurrence and relatively benign in effect.

But conventional wisdom began to shift after the 1998 Heartworm Symposium, where 60 percent of the papers presented were on feline heartworm disease. One of the presentations was a study by Dr. Tom Nelson, past president of the American Heartworm Society, that showed the prevalence of heartworm infection in a random sample of cats was higher than the rates of feline leukemia and feline AIDS.<sup>4</sup>

In 2005, researchers at the University of Florida reported pulmonary arterial lesions in cats that did not have adult heartworms in the heart and lungs but were antibody positive.<sup>5</sup> This led the scientists to postulate that the lesions were caused by the death of immature heartworm larvae. The hypothesis suggested that the disease followed a fundamentally different course than canine heartworm, since heartworms in dogs typically do not cause significant pathology until they reach the adult stage.

## An In-Depth Assessment

The recent Dillon-Blagburn study sought to document in detail the progression of feline heartworm and better understand the origin of lung lesions. The study also was designed to assess the efficacy of a preventive product.

For the experiment, three groups of approximately 10 heartworm-free animals were used. All three groups were subcutaneously infected with L3 *D. immitis* larvae. Group 1 received no preventive medication and worms were allowed to develop naturally. Group 2 was regularly treated with ivermectin at 150 ug/kg (Ivomec—Merial)

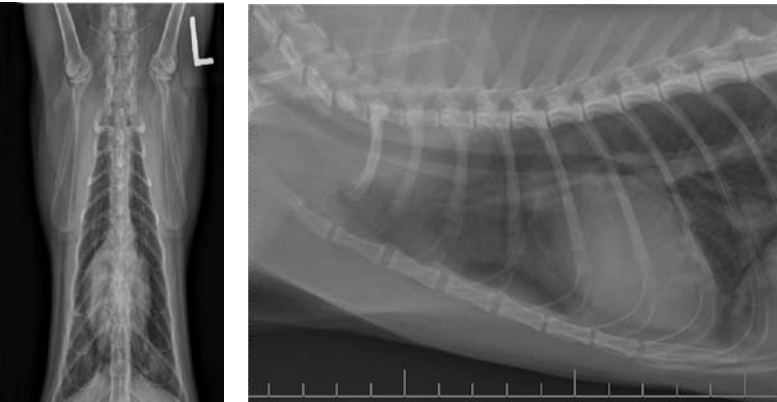
Recent efforts by researchers at Auburn University bear out a hypothesis developed through earlier research and confirm fundamental differences in the way heartworms affect cats and dogs.<sup>3</sup> In so doing, these reinforce an emerging consensus that feline heartworm is more insidious than previously thought and underscore the importance of prevention.

The study, which was conducted by A. Ray Dillon, DVM, MS, MBA, DACVIM, and Byron Blagburn, MS, Ph.D., was recently presented at the 2007 American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine Forum, and was published in a special Parasitology Supplement to *Veterinary Medicine*. Dillon and Blagburn are affiliated with Auburn’s College of Veterinary Medicine and are longtime leaders in the field of heartworm research.

“This is a major study from people who already have contributed a tremendous amount to our understanding of heartworm disease in dogs and in cats,” says Clarke Atkins, DVM, Professor of Medicine and Cardiology at North Carolina State University’s College of Veterinary Medicine.

“What they’ve done is show in great detail that the effects of feline heartworm infection are more extensive than we previously had known. And because both diagnosis and treatment of the disease are problematic, the study highlights once again the importance of prevention.”

Julie Levy, DVM, Ph.D., Professor of Small Animal Medicine at the University of Florida, said, “This work has made a major impact in our understanding of heartworm



Significant bronchial and interstitial disease of the caudal lung lobes is evident in this radiograph of an infected cat.

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Images courtesy of Dr. Ray Dillon and Dr. Byron Blagburn, Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine.

beginning on day 84 of the experiment in an attempt to mimic the natural death of developing heartworms in naturally infected cats. Group 3 was given the preventive product selamectin (Revolution – Pfizer Animal Health) beginning 28 days after infection and continuing through the remaining part of the experiment (240 days).

## Conclusive Results

What the researchers found was that marked lesions and disease do indeed result from the death of immature heartworms in the lungs of cats. Specifically, in Group 2—the cats in which worm larvae were killed to simulate natural death of developing heartworms—lung arterial lesions were consistent with the findings from the Florida study of naturally infected cats. Additionally, lesions in the alveoli, bronchioles and bronchi were observed. The lesions were just as severe as those which developed in Group 1, the untreated animals, despite the fact that no worm fragments were recovered from eight of the nine cats in the group. These findings indicate airway disease, in addition to arterial disease, occurs in cats infected with heartworm larvae, despite the fact the worms may never develop to the adult stage.

Predictably, the cats in Group 1 developed live adult heartworms, with a mean of 4.3 live worms recovered from the animals. In contrast, the cats in Group 3, the animals that had been treated with selamectin, harbored neither adult worms nor evidence of immature heartworms in the lungs.

## Long-Term Impact

Matthew W. Miller, Professor of Cardiology in the College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Science at Texas A&M University, said the Auburn study argues against long-held conventional wisdom that heartworm does not pose a significant problem for cats. At the same time, he said, it should raise awareness among practitioners that asthma-like symptoms can, in fact, be heartworm-related.

“I think this will prompt us to be more aggressive and proactive with prevention,” he said.

Lynelle Johnson, Associate Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology at the University of California-Davis and an expert on feline respiratory illness, agreed that the Auburn study greatly extends the understanding of feline heartworm’s pathophysiology and could help provide greater insight into feline respiratory problems in the long term.

Because of the study, Johnson said, “We may see changes in the incidence of lower respiratory disease over time as more cats in heartworm-affected areas are placed on preventive. But it’s important that we understand how much baseline disease there is now and then use that for comparison in the future.”

Atkins of North Carolina State University said the Auburn experiment will likely continue to produce new science going forward. “This was a very broad and ambitious study, and I think we’re just scratching the surface in terms of what we will ultimately gain from it,” he said. “I’m sure they have a lot of data that they haven’t had time to look into yet.”

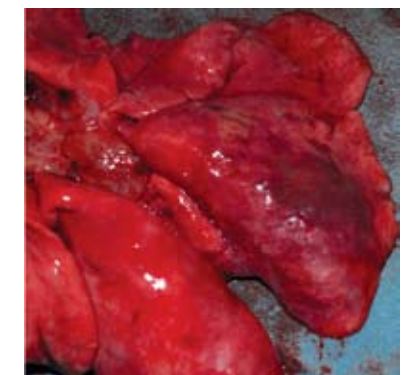
Levy added, “I hope these results will raise awareness among practitioners that heartworms are a threat to cats even if adult worms never develop. It appears that even transient exposure to immature parasites can leave cats with substantial lung pathology that may persist long after any trace of the parasite has been eliminated. Knowing this, practitioners can take a more aggressive stance in promoting heartworm preventive use in cats.”

Nelson of the American Heartworm Society said the work by Dillon and Blagburn should help defeat lingering skepticism in the veterinary community about pathogenicity in infections with juvenile heartworms in cats.

“If you’re not able to see something and not able to diagnose it, you’re inclined to believe it isn’t there,” he said. “But you very quickly become a believer when you fully understand what has been demonstrated in these recent studies. It’s like smoking. You can’t necessarily see it, but the damage is being done.”

# Auburn University Study Highlights:

- An infection with only immature heartworms can cause significant respiratory disease in cats.
- The damage immature heartworms cause is almost as severe as damage resulting from an adult heartworm infection.
- HARD is an inflammatory response to heartworm infection.
- The extensive inflammatory response can potentially damage the pulmonary arteries, arterioles and the small and large airways of the lung parenchyma.
- Heartworm infection mimics bronchial disease; therefore, it is often misdiagnosed.
- Heartworm larvae begin causing damage to the respiratory system months before antigens can be detected.



A perfused lung from a cat with an abbreviated feline heartworm infection 8 months after experimental challenge.

## KNOW Heartworms Changes Perceptions about Feline Heartworm Disease

### HARD Data Critical to Paradigm Shift

KNOW Heartworms, a partnering of the American Heartworm Society (AHS) and the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP), underwritten by Pfizer Animal Health, was launched at the North American Veterinary Conference last January. In the ensuing six months, veterinarians nationwide have requested clinic kits, studied materials and conducted clinic seminars. In addition, a public outreach campaign has garnered millions of media and online impressions to educate consumers about feline heartworm disease.



Direct your clients to [www.knowheartworms.org](http://www.knowheartworms.org) for the latest information about feline heartworm disease.

The partnership between the organizations behind KNOW Heartworms has been key to the campaign's success. The AHS has long been considered *the* source for the most up-to-date information on heartworms. Through the campaign the groups are able to educate veterinarians across the United States. As a result, many practitioners are rethinking their stance on feline heartworm and taking a renewed interest in prevention.

Shannon McCourt, DVM, of Hillsdale Animal Hospital in Advance, N.C., is one veterinarian who has been impacted by KNOW Heartworms. "Before hearing about the campaign, I didn't consider feline heartworms to be as much of an issue, but now I see it as a more impending threat to our feline patients." Dr. McCourt added, "One of the most compelling aspects of the campaign is being able to see the severity of bronchial disease that can occur from a low-worm burden, and realizing that it may be misdiagnosed as feline asthma."

"Now, over 85 years since the first reported case of feline heartworms, with this campaign we are finally starting to get this disease the attention it deserves,"

Tom Nelson, DVM, KNOW Heartworms spokesperson and past president of AHS, said. "KNOW Heartworms is just the beginning of veterinarians educating themselves on the complexity of heartworm disease."

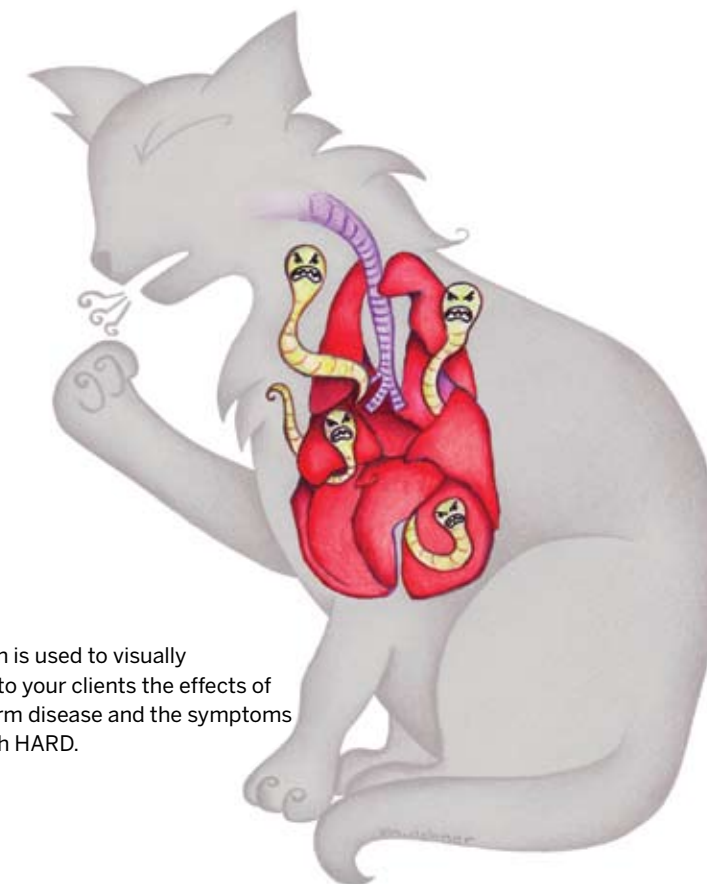
Driving the renewed interest in feline heartworm disease is the scientific data presented in the campaign. The term HARD was defined with a collaborative effort between researchers from the University of Florida, Auburn University and the board for the AHS. This term is a reminder to veterinarians and pet owners that heartworm in cats presents itself differently than it does in dogs.

Leigh Sheridan, DVM, of Columbia Cat Clinic in Columbia, S.C., has been a longtime proponent of feline heartworm prevention. "The Web site is a nice tool. I've recommended it to clients as a reliable source. It takes the burden of educating clients off me since I have limited face time with them." Dr. Sheridan has also found the Five Myths and Misunderstandings useful, not only in educating her clients, but herself as well. "I was interested in learning that even an immature heartworm can cause such significant pathology, which is revealed in the myth, 'Adult Heartworms vs. Larvae.'"

Gayle Craig, CVPM, also found the Web site useful. The staff at her clinic, Countryside Veterinary Hospital in Chelmsford, Mass., knew that feline heartworm prevention was important, but didn't understand HARD and how it affected cats. "Learning about the research and finding out that asthma cases all these years were potentially from heartworm was eye-opening," Craig said. "After visiting [knowheartworms.org](http://knowheartworms.org), we are more educated, better equipped to answer client questions, more motivated to get the word out and excited to be saving cats' lives." Countryside's goal is to save the lives of 1,080 cats within the next year by putting them on prevention. Craig added, "Everyone from the kennel and grooming parlor, through the doctors, techs and up to the front office is promoting feline heartworm prevention in our hospital."

While spring is typically the season to promote heartworm prevention, the AHS and AAFP recommend year-round prevention and will continue working to get all cats on preventives as KNOW Heartworms continues. Make it a point to integrate feline heartworm prevention in your practice all year long. For more ideas on how to promote awareness of feline heartworm disease, visit [www.knowheartworms.org](http://www.knowheartworms.org).

Signs Associated with HARD: Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease	
anorexia	fainting
blindness	lethargy
collapse	rapid heart rate
convulsions	sudden death
coughing	vomiting
diarrhea	weight loss
difficulty breathing	



This illustration is used to visually communicate to your clients the effects of feline heartworm disease and the symptoms associated with HARD.

## Feline Heartworm Disease 5 Myths and Misunderstandings

**1 Dogs vs. Cats**  
Heartworm disease is not just a canine disease. Heartworms affect cats differently than dogs, but the disease they cause is equally serious.

**2 Indoor vs. Outdoor Cats**  
It only takes one mosquito to infect a cat, and because mosquitoes can get indoors, both indoor and outdoor cats are at risk and should receive heartworm preventive medication. In a North Carolina study, 28 percent of the cats diagnosed with heartworm were inside-only cats.

**3 It's a Heart Disease**  
The name "heartworm disease" is a misnomer, as it mostly affects the lungs and not just the heart. Signs are often mistaken for feline asthma, allergic bronchitis or other respiratory diseases.

**4 Adult Heartworms vs. Larvae**  
Cats do not need an adult heartworm to exhibit clinical signs; in fact, larvae are a main cause of the problems. Studies show 50 percent of cats infected with heartworm larvae have significant disease of the small arteries supplying blood to the lungs.

**5 Diagnosis**  
Diagnosis is difficult as negative antigen and antibody tests do not rule out heartworm disease. Positive tests, however, are significant.



Pandora was diagnosed with HARD in February.

## Veterinarian's Eyes Opened to HARD

When a cat presented with coughing and a voice change, Dr. Caroline Simard says she never considered heartworms might be the cause. She thought it might be asthma and decided to do some blood work. "Totally by mistake I included the heartworm antigen test, and it came back positive," she said. The cat, it turned out, had Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease, or HARD.

Dr. Simard practiced in Montreal, Canada, for 12 years before moving to Point Breeze Veterinary Clinic in Pittsburgh, Pa., three years ago. "In Canada, because it is colder, veterinarians mostly recommend giving preventives during the summer. Any news of prevention and products takes a few years to get up there, and I just hadn't been exposed to it," she said. Dr. Simard had only ever seen three cases of heartworms, and all were canine in Pittsburgh.

Pandora, a 10-year-old cat, started breathing heavily, gagging and coughing around December of last year. Pandora had never had any health problems before, so her owner, Carrie Rudolph, began to worry when Pandora's condition didn't improve. She made an appointment with Dr. Simard

in February, and before her visit did some research on the Internet. She read online that heartworms could be the cause of Pandora's distress, but knew heartworms were rare in felines, so she didn't bring it up in her visit.

When Dr. Simard alerted Rudolph to Pandora's diagnosis, she wasn't shocked. "I had researched feline heartworm disease and thought it might be one of the possibilities, but I've since done more research and was surprised to learn that I don't live in an area with high incidence," Rudolph said.

Dr. Simard added, "I had heard about HARD, but this case absolutely changed my thinking. I've since put my own cats on prevention, and I've been telling this story to all my feline clients, recommending prevention."

Pandora is now receiving a steroid treatment and is no longer showing signs of respiratory distress. Dr. Simard tested Rudolph's other two cats for heartworms. Both of the tests came back negative, and the cats are now on prevention.

## Making Sense

(Cont'd from page 2)

We shouldn't worry about false positives; if anything, we should be concerned about false negatives as we've found that a significant number of cats with adult heartworms have tested negative to antibodies. Again, using both an antigen and antibody test increases your chances of making the appropriate diagnosis.

Nationwide serological data reports 12 to 16 percent of cats are antibody positive, and another study from the University of Florida indicates over half of antibody-positive cats have pulmonary pathology. So, one might ask, "Why aren't we diagnosing more cases?" Practitioners are just now starting to understand that feline heartworm disease is more of a pulmonary problem than a cardiovascular one. This pulmonary pathology is frequently misdiagnosed as feline asthma, but fortunately the treatment for

both heartworm pathology and asthma is the same—prednisone and bronchodilators. The difference is asthma cannot be prevented, but heartworm disease is 100 percent preventable.

What complicates things even further is some cats are asymptomatic, and they may stay that way until the worm develops into an adult worm and finally begins to die. It may only take one dying worm to cause severe pulmonary inflammation and thromboembolism, which often leads to fatal acute lung injury. At that point, it is too late to save the cat, a cat which could have lived a full, healthy life if it had been put on prevention.

While we have made significant progress on understanding feline heartworm disease in the last decade, and notably in the last year with **KNOW Heartworms**, we still have much to learn. Like most diseases, finding answers to questions ultimately leads to more and more questions.



The updated heartworm incidence map was displayed on the Reuters digital billboard in Times Square, New York, with the headline, "The Secret Is Out On Feline Heartworm Disease: New Studies Call For Prevention & Redefinition."



"Research reveals urgent need for proactive prevention of feline heartworm disease."

## In Case You Missed It...

In addition to being featured on the big screen in Times Square and mentioned on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, the **KNOW Heartworms** campaign has garnered coverage in many veterinary trade publications, including:

- *DVM*, February 2007
- *Veterinary Forum*, February 2007
- *JAVMA*, February 15, 2007
- *Veterinary Practice News*, April 2007

Also, be sure to check out the transcript from the April 2007 AAEP Rounds on VIN that covered feline heartworm disease with Dr. Tom Nelson. It is free to AAEP and VIN members at: [www.vin.com/Members/SearchDB/Rounds/LC070422.htm](http://www.vin.com/Members/SearchDB/Rounds/LC070422.htm)

*"Pay heed to the warning signs if you have a cat. My wife and I have a cat. Cats infected with heartworm disease do not show any outward signs. Here are some of the signs. Difficulty breathing, diarrhea, weight loss, and the last one—SUDDEN DEATH..."*

—Jay Leno, The Tonight Show

## Be Sure NOT to Miss



The AAFP Fall Meeting will convene in Austin, Texas, to discuss Feline Dentistry and Diseases of the Head and Neck. Make plans now to attend this event in the "Live Music Capital of the World."

**AAFP Fall Meeting  
November 11-13, 2007  
Hyatt Regency Austin  
Austin, Texas**

## Creative Ways

(Cont'd from page 1)

"We went to a local elementary school and did a program for the second and fourth graders," Dr. White said. The staff created costumes and goody bags containing coloring pages for the 160 children and handouts for their parents. Staff members then displayed the students' artwork in the clinic. To remind cat owners to have their cats tested for heartworm and use a preventive, the staff made posters for the clinic and discussed heartworm disease with clients.

Dr. White said the Five Myths and Misunderstandings were an excellent teaching tool for everyone. Not only for the veterinarians, but for the veterinary technicians and the entire office staff, "The KNOW Heartworms campaign gave a lot of information to the staff that they can pass on to the clients." Dr. White especially liked the "Indoor vs. Outdoor Cats" myth. She said some clients have been skeptical of the need for prevention for their indoor cat, but Dr. White is pleased to now have studies to back her stance on prevention for all cats.

"Since the campaign has come out, I've studied all the materials. I now see that feline heartworm is more of a problem than I originally thought," Dr. White said. "We have promoted heartworm prevention in dogs for years—now it is time to do the same for our feline patients."

Wolftever was not the only clinic that showcased how it promoted feline heartworm disease. Veterinarians from across the nation revealed how their clinics' campaigns were successful.

The staff of Cat Hospital At Towson (CHAT), the second-place winner, was excited and proud to have made an impact educating cat owners and helping cats. The entire CHAT team of 25 members participated in the KNOW Heartworms campaign, using a variety of approaches to teach their clients about heartworms. They put up displays about testing and prevention, and they



A bulletin board displays the names of cats that were tested for heartworms at **Wolftever Pet Hospital**.

produced a DVD about heartworms to play in the waiting room. Staff members encouraged clients to fill out a survey on cat health, after which they were eligible to win a free supply of topical preventive. Leading up to the Easter holiday, the staff also distributed plastic Easter eggs filled with educational information on heartworms. CHAT saw great success with all its initiatives and was able to get many clients to protect their cats with a heartworm preventive.

VCA Hemingway in Saratoga, Calif., tied for third place in the contest with Eastex Veterinary Clinic in Kingwood, Texas. Tania Nochimson, hospital manager at VCA Hemingway, said her clinic was already a big advocate of feline heartworm prevention, but she was able to use materials from the campaign to increase awareness among clients. Her clinic had an entire morning



A decorative bulletin board filled with information about heartworm prevention greets clients at the **Cat Hospital At Towson**, the second-place winner of the contest.

dedicated to feline heartworm prevention with a latte and smoothie bar. "We offered clients complimentary beverages, as well as informational handouts on feline heartworm disease. This was the perfect opening to ask the clients whether or not their cat was on heartworm prevention, or if they were even educated on what heartworms are," Nochimson said. The clinic also displayed a poster of the image, "Do We Love Our Dogs More than Our Cats?" This piece prompted many clients to wonder if they aren't being as strict with their cats about heartworm prevention as they are with their dogs.

As an owner of four cats, Raine Saldinger, Eastex Veterinary Clinic office assistant, is able to tell clients firsthand why prevention is so important. "We now know that heartworms can cause respiratory problems in cats, and we are applying this knowledge to any of our cats that come in," said Saldinger. "Our doctors are always open to new information, and because cats are becoming a larger part of our practice, the new studies are sure to have made an impression," she added. "We will continue to inform our clients about the hazards of heartworm disease in cats."



A free latte and smoothie bar and information table displayed elements from **KNOW Heartworms** at **VCA Hemingway Cat Hospital** in Saratoga, Calif., which tied for third place with **Eastex Veterinary Clinic** in Kingwood, Texas.

**Dr. James R. Richards:  
A Tribute from AAFP  
President Dr. Margie Scherk**

Jim was a remarkable person who was highly regarded for integrity in feline medicine. He was consistently sincere and respectful, whether he was relating to an average pet owner, veterinarian or media professional; he always gave everyone his complete attention. Jim took the time to answer questions from pet owners in *Cat Watch*, Cornell University's newsletter for cat people, and it is obvious he wanted to help them and their cats by offering the best information he could.

Jim never sought the spotlight, but was an excellent media spokesperson, who always did his homework. Thus, he was able to explain pertinent information and answer questions eloquently. On the rare occasion that he didn't know an answer, he wasn't afraid to suggest who might have an answer or offer to find out. He never became rattled and always remained a soft-spoken gentleman with a ready chuckle.

Jim was a man filled with deep faith and direction. His mild manner masked a keen mind, which could assess a great deal of information. His work with the Cornell Feline Health Center, as well as on the Vaccine Sarcoma Task Force and AAFP Vaccine Guidelines, showed his skill in working with a wide variety of interests, which, while mostly in agreement, sometimes failed to overlap. His ability to find resolution whilst always looking out for the end user—the cat—made him an outstanding spokesperson for **KNOW Heartworms**. He encouraged AAFP members and all veterinarians working with cats to understand more about heartworm disease and the need for testing and prevention.

All those who knew him surely hold memories of Jim's warm, open smile, his honesty and humility, his quiet humor and loving presence. We will not see his combination of gifts and personality again. I feel blessed to have known and been touched by you, JimBob.

# A Champion of Cats; A Friend to All

## *Dr. James Robert Richards, Jr. 1948-2007*

In April, James R. Richards, DVM, the gregarious, always smiling, always positive ambassador of the veterinary profession was unexpectedly lost to us. He will be missed by all of those who knew him personally and professionally, and those who may not have known him but relied on his sage advice regarding feline health care.

While Dr. Richards was noted as one of the leaders in changes in vaccine protocols, his most recent public education endeavors focused on the general well-being of cats and parasite control. He represented the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) as a spokesperson for the **KNOW Heartworms** campaign, on which he worked tirelessly to increase awareness of heartworm disease in cats.

His legacy to foster the well-being of cats began on a farm in Ohio, where he said he "was far better at raising cats than anything else." This passion for cats was fulfilled in Dr. Richards' work as director of the Cornell Feline Health Center, as a president and media spokesperson for the AAFP, and as editor-in-chief of *Cat Watch*, a newsletter for cat owners.

Dr. Richards was an expert communicator on feline health, and he used his skills to speak with and teach veterinarians, reporters and pet owners about complex issues related to the health and well-being of cats. He was truly a voice of reason in all of his endeavors, and



his down-to-earth communication style made everyone he spoke with feel comfortable.

It was Dr. Richards' intent to have his work make a difference in the lives of cats, and his legacy will continue in the many initiatives he helped establish, including the **KNOW Heartworms** campaign. Pfizer Animal Health would like to acknowledge Dr. Richards not only for his work on this campaign, but for his contributions to the veterinary profession and the health of cats.



**Pfizer Animal Health**

